Organizer Tips and Tricks

Remember to use the Organizing Conversation Structure! Can have it up on your screen while you are on calls as a reminder.

Knowledge of Current Activity

- We want our organizers to have a baseline knowledge about what is happening in the union to talk to others about it.
- Try to stay as **informed** as possible about **departmental work** and broader institute level work. Also keep an eye on the **issue campaigns!**
- Good ways to stay up to date:
    - **Weekly digest**
    - **Dept coordination meetings** (find yours on the calendar!)
    - **Issue campaign slack channels**
- You don't need to attend every meeting, people are busy and we just want you to be involved in what you can do!

The Goal of an organizing conversation is to:

1. Learn about our coworkers' concerns
2. Answer questions about the union and the right to organize
3. Offer a vision of how things can be different and how we can get there
4. Assess the level of support
5. Get a commitment to take action and arrange a follow-up plan.

Early Ladder of Asks

- **Contacts:** We always want to ask if people know anyone who they think we should talk to about unionization who they can connect us to. This is an especially good ask for people who are well connected or don't have much time. Try to think who they may know that would be especially important for them to connect us with.
- **Orientation session:** If people are interested in getting more involved, it is important to get them to an orientation to ensure they get to hear the basics of unionization and what we are doing. It should be framed as a one time thing that can help people to know what is going on and get some common questions answered. Try to set up a follow up convo and remember to send a reminder day of (or night before) to confirm if they can make it.
- **Union support statement:** More complete description of this ask can be found here. This can be a great way to have supporters without time show their support. It is best to wait until they know the union well enough to understand their support, at least after an orientation typically. This is especially important to get dept leaders to write as they will help to win over their peers as well. You can share this form with them to submit it.
- **Dept meeting:** Most depts have weekly dept coordination meetings to discuss building the union week to week at the dept level, connect issue campaigns at the dept level, and discuss advocacy efforts. They are an excellent place for people to get involved and it is strongly encouraged. If people can't get plugged into these meetings, it is best to have an organizer in touch with them who can make the weekly meeting.

- **Issue meeting:** Our issue based meetings, currently including RISE, COVID Relief, and International Student Working Group regularly and other meetings ad hoc, are a great way to engage students who are particularly interested in working on those issues. Organizers should try to connect recruits with organizers involved in that work, potentially as a 2-1 following an orientation prior to attending to ensure they have the background if needed.
- **Union rep ask**
    - Union reps are organizers taking the next step of committing to be one of 250+ public union supporters proactively building the union by having conversations with those around them about the issues they care about, what the union is doing, and signing people up on authorization cards.
    - It's important our organizing team is representative of the departments, sub disciplines, labs and cohorts and reflects the diversity of grad workers at MIT. Having a representative group of organizers is critical to a successful campaign and an important step in going public. We are focusing on this ask so much because it is a critical assessment of our ability to go public. We can only go public once, and so we need to know we have enough organizers to run a successful card campaign and to engage the vast majority of campus.
    - We want to ensure that union reps are well prepared for the role by getting support and having plenty of conversations before we go public. We want to support that development through training and direct mentorship with 2-1 conversations. Attending weekly dept coordination meetings is highly encouraged for union reps, but some will not be able to and that shouldn't preclude them from participating in the role. If people are willing to get basic training, be public, and help us collect cards as much as they can, we are thrilled to have their help.

Recruitment pipeline

- This is how we think about getting folks involved in the early stage to help us get familiar with them and to help them understand how we are organized and what we are fighting for. It helps us to build the organization in a systematic way.
- We know organizing is challenging, so we want to make sure people get all the necessary skills and knowledge at each step to do it effectively. As a result we try to make sure that people don't skip over parts of the recruitment pipeline.
- **Organizing convo:** The aim of the first organizing conversation is to try to get to know them better and see what they care about while also introducing them to the union.
- **Orientation:** This is a highly structured organizing conversation to give them an overview of how the union works and to try to make sure we answer some basic questions they may have. This should be followed by another conversation to see how they'd like to get more involved.
- **Organizer training:** The training is where we ensure that our organizers are capable of talking about the issues and the union, with the goal of being able to recruit others into the union as well. This step is also followed by a conversation to make a list of who to talk to and plan some 2-1 convos. It can also be a good opportunity to answer questions

and talk about becoming a union rep. We will also want to plug organizers into their weekly dept coordination meeting if possible.
- **Union rep activity:** We absolutely need to be working to sign up more union reps, a critical role for the success of the union. Union reps will be public organizers in their department who can talk to their coworkers about the issues they care about, what is happening in the union, and to sign people up on cards. We aim to have over 250 union reps covering the entire campus signed up before we can go public.

Difficult conversations

- **Don't get discouraged** by difficult conversations, make sure to talk with other organizers about your experience and they will likely have had these difficult conversations too, they will have tips and answers for you!
- **Never make people defensive** about their anti-union stance, try to understand and seek out the missing information or misconception.
- If possible, try to ask people what their peers' and colleges' concerns may be, adding some personal distance which makes people feel less attached to the concerns.
- We **don't want people to feel ganged up on**, so don't try to have a group of union organizers all try to change someone's mind at one, this will only make them defensive.
- While it is usually preferable to have a **1-on-1 or small group conversation** with someone, we don't always have the choice. If someone is talking trash about the union, we should try to defend the union and counter that, otherwise people will walk away with a one-sided anti-union perspective
- Give them a chance over time to change their opinion, give regular updates and check-ins to work on that over time. Eventually something will happen that will change their mind on a need for a union.
    - **"No good organizer like a bad boss!"**
- We also run **trainings** on combating anti-union talking points effectively and will be running this more before going public.
- Good to keep in mind, we want to **affirm and reframe** their concerns. This practically means that if someone raises an anti-union concern or question, we can first affirm the core of their concern ("I totally get it! I wouldn't want someone to tell me I can't do my research either.") and then reframe to something which is easier to discuss in a less hostile way ("So maybe we can talk about how union democracy works if that sounds good to you?").

Connecting during the pandemic / digital organizing

- If you can **talk to people in person ("face-to-face")**, this is basically always **preferable**. However, we can't stop all of our organizing just because we can't see each other as easily.
- Here are some **tips** for how we are reaching out to people:
    - If they are your friend, you can always **text to check in** and try to get on a call, most of the call won't be about unionizing, but you can bring it up, see what they think, and if they want to talk about it more

    - **Use the form of conversation they are most responsive** to (e.g. text for people you normally text, slack for folks who are active on a dept. slack, facebook message people who are active on facebook)
    - Sometimes you can tell someone you work with that you want to **chat with them after the end of a meeting** and just stay on a bit afterwards
    - More often, we don't have direct connections, so it helps to be connected by a **mutual acquaintance**, or even if you can say "Mark said I should get in touch with you because you might be interested in X / worked on Y / care about Z / etc." This can be related to our issue campaigns or just something you both care about
    - Ask people if they want to **learn more about RISE** or if they have heard about the **Harvard Union**
- Best if we can keep building rapport with people over time so they are more comfortable with us and trust us, so **remember to try and stay connected with people especially when we are so isolated**